

SQUASH THE STATE

Resistance 500 Demo.



FNB Puppets and food/literature table at Resistance 500 Demo

National FNB Update

One of the most inspiring aspects of the National Gathering was the opportunity for people in various groups to share information about what the various groups are doing. How many times are they serving? What kinds of actions have happened lately?

Some themes emerged out of this. Most collectives had recently done support for some kind of encampment or takeover by homeless people. This was another concrete way of supporting the organized efforts of homeless people to demand their rights. Also many of the groups are serving in locations or on days that aren't served by regular soup kitchens. In this way FNB is filling a need that's not being met by the governmental or charity system. Some groups are increasing the number of days they serve and choosing to lo-

cate in more visible, high-traffic areas.

Below are updates from the many FNB collectives that were represented at the gathering:

Sacramento, CA: Sacramento FNB is serving 80-100 meals every Sunday at a park that is near both the City Hall and the California State Capitol Building. They've been together nearly two years and recently served at a rally against welfare cuts where they were joined by members of the East Bay and S.F. groups. They want to increase to two days a week in November and they're planning an outdoor music and information festival "Sacramento Palooza" to increase awareness about Food Not Bombs in Sacramento.

Portland, OR: In December of '91 and January of '92 homeless youths established an encampment on the steps of the Portland City Hall.

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The climax of the Food Not Bombs first national gathering was the protest against the official National Columbus Day celebration. Food Not Bombs started the day at 9am at Aquatic Park joining several thousand people from San Francisco and around the Country. "Food" a puppet of a native American and "Bombs" a puppet of Columbus stood behind our table as people passed by to get oranges, pastries and bread.

The large size of the crowd prevented the planned reenactment of Columbus' landing in the "New World." Afterwards the group began marching to Civic Center Plaza where SF FNB serves lunch and dinner. After about 5 blocks a group of marchers including many FNB members and the "Black Block" separated from the main march to go and disrupt the official Columbus Day Parade. The police attacked many of the demonstrators who blocked floats and chanted anti-Columbus slogans within the parade. An affinity group even managed to run off with the Santa Maria float. One person is still in jail, however, for allegedly fire bombing a police car.

At the same time, a large crew served free food to hundreds of people at the rally in Civic Center. Speakers and music all supported the message that 500 years of exploitation is enough and that it is time to get together and resist.



Power Dynamics

The Power and Privilege Dynamics workshop, led by Margo Adair dealt with gender and class dynamics within FNB.

We began with everyone looking at their own heritage and how it affected us. Margo said that in a white middle-class male heterosexual society, people do not want to talk about disturbing subjects, that it is a part of the American culture to maintain a good image. So, we must look at ourselves and deal with our own issues, then bring them back to the group, and work on everyone's issues together. As a group, we can learn to balance dominating and oppressing traits.

It is important to take time to process during the FNB meetings, allow time for people to discuss issues and really listen to each other. We don't always have to be doers. Some of Margo's suggestions included: people who usually take initiative at meetings should let someone else do it; let the first 5 speakers at a meeting be women, low-income, or of color; discuss how it feels to serve food to people with no income or housing; and look for political differences instead of personality conflicts.

Networking and Starting New Groups

One of the main points of this gathering was for people from different Food Not Bombs chapter to network, both informally and formally. We networked individually during meals, breaks and social event. We also began the conference with a check in, telling what each chapter of Food Not Bombs was doing. It was interesting to hear how similar many of our problems were. It was also obvious that our movement is undergoing rapid growth. This was exciting, and we all wanted to think of ways to help accelerate the trend.

San Francisco Food Not Bombs was given a \$1,000 grant by Agape Foundation to help start new Food Not Bombs groups. Our stated goal is to start five new groups. A workshop was held to help decide how best to use the money to achieve that goal. Various ideas were proposed. A 1-800 number may be started so that anybody in the United States could receive free information about Food Not Bombs. Ads may be placed in progressive national magazines such as Mother Jones or Z, or in anarchist publications such as Love and Rage.

Another approach is to make tapes and send them in to various local radio programs. Each chapter would make a basic informational tape about their group and send it to radio stations that might be sympathetic. In San Francisco, a radio station has already been lined up.

Some money might go directly for seed money to help new groups get started. Some discussion was also held on international outreach.

Obviously, the amount of money is not great, and the opinions on how to utilize it vary, so not all options can be implemented.

The Politics of Self Help

The Politics of Self Help was the first of several workshops during the gathering that focused on issues of particular concern to womyn. This workshop illustrated how womyn begin to hate their bodies; how sexism is manifest in society and reinforces low self esteem; and how womyn fight back and take control of their own bodies.

Because of a time crunch, we were only able to do half the workshop- which was about the Church and the American Medical Association. The rest of the information from the workshop will be available in a packet form.

We spent the first half of the workshop discussion our relationship with modern medicine and our own illnesses. Then we talked a bit about what herbal remedies we have tried; what worked and what didn't. We discussed why womyn need self help - being that the medical establishment is an institution that is out to make a profit, not help people. They

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are often wrong in their diagnosis and proscribe dangerous and rash methods of treatment.

The callousness and apathy that we have received from doctors has left us feeling weak and out of control over the fate of our own bodies. We want to look at ourselves, to love our bodies in their own unique form, to detect something wrong before it becomes serious, and to heal ourselves with herbs, vitamins, and nutritious food, instead of with drugs and operations. We want to take control of our lives again - and in the spirit of Food Not Bombs - that is to take power out of the medical estab-

Women's Centered Workshops

With the recent passing of the Food Not Bombs national gathering, it was impossible not to notice a certain amount of tension generated from the presence of gender specific women's workshops in relation to the overall agenda of activities. Essentially, the two camps of discourse concerning the role of women's workshops assumed either: 1) the decision to have workshops closed to men was a separatist and unnecessarily divisive gesture on the women's part, or 2) the idea behind restricted workshops was merely an attempt to create a supportive environment for women to connect with one another in solidarity.

It was suggested on several occasions that by scheduling the women's workshops in direct conflict with the general ones, women were placed in the dubious position of choosing to remain loyal to their gender or loyal to FNB. Being one of the several women involved in the conceptualization of the women's workshops, the last thing I wanted to see happen was yet another instance

of establishing choice on an either/or binary basis. However I cannot deny that we did overextend ourselves (although I think this criticism applies to the gathering as a whole) and unfairly depended on one individual as go-between for the omen's group and other organizers. Rather than presenting our ideas directly, communication was displaced to a mediated , or secondary level.

As was apparent, the workshops were not scheduled in a complementary manner. Could this have been avoided and if so, how? Obviously, due to the inflexibility of certain presentations (for whatever reason), some conflict was inevitable. Yet, had we as women enlarged our organizational focus to take into account the non-gender specific workshops, had we been more active in the process of restructuring the gathering (I place the emphasis on "re" because as women I believe it is crucial to persistently question what is set before us as the status quo), perhaps we could have found empowerment from a more holistic approach.

I'm not suggesting that women automatically need to assume a "mothering" type of role. I'm simply acknowledging our capacity to affect change via a complex understanding of the situation at hand making a concerted effort to view potential conflict from different perspectives. This is not to downplay the women's workshops which I personally found to be very satisfying. Instead, this piece is my visualization of a women's alliance: sisterhood that bonds women through shared strengths, encourages our participation in a more inclusive attempt to combat sexism/patriarchy, and allows us the space to address our individual needs as women.

-Karina

Nationwide Thanksgiving Housing Takeovers

During the workshop on squatting given on Friday, Oct. 9 by Tonee from the Santa Cruz FNB contingent it was obvious that a large majority of the individuals attending supported a planned nationwide federal and city-owned property takeover action. For all those interested in participating, preparations must be undertaken immediately; first, to locate and research appropriate sites, to develop community support, to do media prep, and most importantly to form a core group of homeless people committed to sustaining the building for as long as possible.

Food Not Bombs' participation in this action could be crucial; the importance of hot meals in primitive living situations under fire from the authorities cannot be underestimated. The support network of dedicated grassroots activists that FNB is (in)famous for could make the difference between merely creating a media event and forming a lasting resource for homeless people in our Communities. Takeovers should be planned for the week before Thanksgiving, Nov.20-26, 1992. For more information contact Tonee in Santa Cruz at (408) 427-1125 or a Food Not Bombs near you.

Attention FNB Women

If your interested in participating in a women centered publication contact Shoshana Wingate 477 14th St. SF, CA. 94110 (415) 255-4837

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CA. 94118 (415) 330-5030

National Update Continued

They demanded an end to police harassment, an increase in programs for street youth and that unused city buildings be opened up for homeless people. Portland FNB did regular support for this action and several members of their group were arrested there. The group is currently serving 1-2 times a week and giving out 5-10 food boxes each week to poor families.

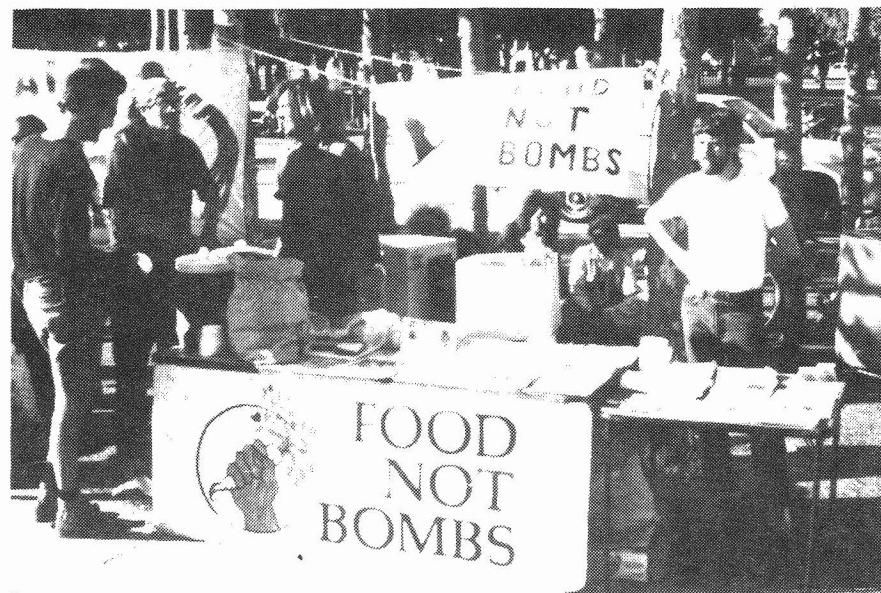
East Bay, CA: This Berkeley/Oakland based group serves 5 days a week in People's Park near the University of California. They are an important part of the movement to preserve the right of homeless and poor people to use the park.

Women in the East Bay and S.F. groups also meet regularly to discuss issues of gender and sexism that arise out of their work with Food Not Bombs. They recently attended a presentation by Angela Davis and organized a number of events and workshops for the national gathering.

Eugene, OR: Every Sunday Eugene FNB serves it weekly meal. They're also supporting a homeless encampment on State owned land that has come under regular attack by the State Police. Just before arriving at the gathering they got porta-toilets put in. Last July, they also did support for Earth First's walk through the Siskyou's. They also hope to expand to two days a week soon.

Long Beach, CA: For three years Long Beach FNB has been serving food every Sunday near City Hall. When they've served during the week the Mayor complains about seeing them and has the police go and bother them, but no one has been arrested. The Long Beach group gets a lot of support from a local farmers market that provides them with both leftover food and a yearly grant of \$2,000.

On Dec. 4th they'll be hosting a



Southern California WEB meeting for people in the Circle A community (for info. write PO Box 4472, Long Beach CA 90804-0472). They're also working with people in L.A. and San Diego to start new groups in those cities.

Boston, MA: Boston FNB started in 1980 and is serving twice a week in Boston Commons. They also do numerous demonstrations and have a long history of catering progressive conferences and events. This supports organizers by providing food to event participants at no direct cost and FNB gets great exposure and donations from the organizers and the participants.

San Francisco, CA: From their start in 1988 to the Summer of 1991 over 325 SF FNB members were arrested for serving food, without a single conviction. The largest of the FNB groups, SF now serves 13 meals a week: lunch on Mondays in Golden Gate Park and dinner across from City Hall every night and lunch across from City Hall every weekday.

SF FNB is currently supporting an encampment in Civic Center Plaza that is opposing an anti panhandling measure on the November ballot. They've set up a tent and are serving coffee and other food 24 hours a day.

The National Newsletter Project

The Agape Foundation has given SF FNB \$1,000 to do national outreach which this newsletter is a part of. A combination of people from various FNB groups participated in the production of this issue. In order to keep this project going we will need other groups to send in articles about what they are doing. We also would like to rotate the production of the newsletter among various collectives.

For the next issue please send your articles and inquiries to SF FNB. Also send us your addresses so that you can receive future issues of Squash the State at your home.

SF FNB 3145 Geary Blvd. #12 SF, CA 94118 (415) 330-5030.

Contributors

All articles are the product of the collective unless credited to a specific author.

Contributors: C.T. Butler, Ethan Davidson, Mary Ferrante, Karina, Keith McHenry, Reverend Al, Elisa Smith, Alex Vitale, Shoshana Wingate.

